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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4886
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000824

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR; JOINT
STAFF FOR LTGEN SELVA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#) [KWBG](#)
SUBJECT: SETTLERS ATTACK PALESTINIAN FARMERS AND ACTIVISTS
WEST OF NABLUS

REF: A. 08 JERUSALEM 1918
[1](#)B. 08 JERUSALEM 1908

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Settlers attacked Palestinian farmers and Israeli and international activists who had gathered on May 19 to plow fields in the northern West Bank, according to Arik Ascherman of "Rabbis for Human Rights." The resulting skirmish resulted in minor injuries and the arrest of one Palestinian farmer. An Israeli NGO promoting Palestinian farmers' access to land claimed that, despite advance coordination with the GOI, the IDF and Israeli border police did not protect the farmers, and instead used stun grenades against them. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Rabbi Arik Ascherman, the head of Israeli NGO "Rabbis for Human Rights", told Poloff on May 20 that a group of settlers from Havat Gilad outpost, west of Nablus, attacked Palestinian farmers and activists on May 19 who were attempting to plow land between Jit village and Havat Gilad outpost. IDF soldiers and Israeli border policemen were on site, according to Ascherman, because his organization had coordinated in advance with the IDF. Ascherman said the settlers' attack started a skirmish between the farmers and the settlers, during which the soldiers and policemen targeted Palestinian farmers with stun grenades, but ignored the settlers, who threw stones and set fire to a Palestinian field. Ascherman said he was lightly injured when he was hit in the chest by a stone thrown by a settler. He said a young Palestinian who hit a border policeman with a stone was arrested. According to press reports, and confirmed by Ascherman, no settlers were questioned or arrested.

[1](#)3. (C) Ascherman said that as part of the incident on May 19, Havat Gilad settlers made a new ownership claim to the land between Jit and Havat Gilad. He called the ownership claim "frivolous," saying it is a common method employed by settlers to prohibit Palestinian work on a parcel of land while the ownership claim is examined. He dismissed the "Shomron Settlers' Committee" public statement on May 20 that "leftist activists" were "making every effort to create clashes with the Jewish residents." Ascherman said he will meet with IDF West Bank Legal Advisor Sharon Afek on May 24 to discuss coordination and the new land ownership claim. Ascherman claimed that the Nablus area DCO tells Palestinian farmers that working with Israeli activists hurts their chances of getting permits to farm their land.

WALLES